

Governor Pritzker Announces New Southwestern Illinois Justice & Workforce Development Campus

August 15 2022 5:08 PM



BELLEVILLE — Governor Pritzker joined local legislators and stakeholders today to announce a new law enforcement-focused campus in Belleville in partnership with the city of Belleville, Southwestern Illinois College (SWIC), the Illinois State Police (ISP), and Southern Illinois University (SIU). The campus, located on the former site of Lindenwood University's undergraduate program, was repurchased by the City of Belleville through a grant from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO).

“Thanks to a grant from Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Southwestern Illinois Justice & Workforce Development Campus will mold our passionate students into law enforcement professionals — from police officers to lawyers to forensic scientists,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “This is a shining example of good government doing good work — collaborating with community partners and investing the time and resources necessary to keep our communities safe and revitalize and rebuild Illinois for *all* our residents.”

The \$3 million DCEO capital grant reimbursed the city for the purchase of the campus space. SWIC is operating and maintaining the campus for the city and has \$5.9 million allocated through the Illinois Community College Board to operate the facility. The program will integrate a new police training academy run by SWI and opening fall of 2022. The inaugural class of the institute will house 125 to 130 cadets on campus. SWIC plans to move other criminal justice programs to the campus in the future as capacity increases.

SIU Carbondale's Law School is also launching a pilot program this month the campus called the Metro East Criminal Justice Experiential Learning Program. Third year law students will live and take classes on campus while interning in Criminal Justice focused offices such as the Public Defender's Office. SIU is planning to invest \$3.5 million in the pilot program this year, with class sizes increasing in the future.

In addition, the ISP Forensic Science Laboratory in Belleville is directly across the street from the Southwestern IL Justice & Workforce Development Campus and ISP is establishing, in partnership with SIU Edwardsville, the Illinois State Police Forensic Science Institute that will be housed on the SWIC operated campus. This location will train forensic science professionals to be deployed across the state's crime labs.

Governor Pritzker's administration has made other significant investments in public safety and criminal justice workforce development, including funding for the largest ever ISP cadet class in the state's history. The administration has also funded new forensic crime labs in Joliet and Decatur, as well as investments in new personnel and

state of the art software and robotics to speed turnaround times for forensic cases. The state recently announced that the DNA sample forensic backlog had been reduced to zero. Previously, thousands of untested kits had languished in testing centers, depriving survivors of sexual assault an opportunity to pursue justice.

“SIU Carbondale’s presence in this facility fits well with our strategic plan, Imagine 2030, and its pillars that address partnerships and student success,” said SIU Carbondale Chancellor Austin A. Lane. “A lot of people worked hard to make this day a reality. They had the vision and imagination to see our students getting hands-on experiences to prepare them for their future careers as they serve a community in the Metro East.”

“SIU Law has wanted to have a physical presence in the Metro East for more than 25 years,” Dean Camille M. Davidson said. “We are excited that this is coming to fruition. Because of its close proximity to St. Louis, our students have federal and state court opportunities in Illinois and Missouri. This is a wonderful place and opportunity to expand SIU Law’s footprint to a region that has the largest number of attorneys in Illinois outside of the Chicago area. As the only public law school within about two hours of Belleville, we belong to all of Southern Illinois and serve the whole region.”

“The City of Belleville’s commitment to the growth of our region will provide exceptional educational opportunities for our area,” said Belleville Mayor Patty Gregory. “Because of outstanding support from our state and local governments, and many educational entities, we are proud to announce that the Southwestern Illinois Justice & Workforce Development campus will ensure that this vision continues, for decades to come.”

"There is no limit to what we can accomplish when we work together for the benefit of our students," said Rep. Katie Stuart (D-Edwardsville). "With this project alone you have a state university, community college, local government and state agencies all working together to make it a reality. Everyone is utilizing their strengths so we can have a stronger criminal justice system, and the young people building the future of the field are set up for success."

"Budgets are about priorities, and I was proud to prioritize the \$3 million for the City of Belleville to make this dream a reality," said Assistant Majority Leader Jay Hoffman (D-Swansea). "When Lindenwood left Belleville there was major local concern about the future of this campus. This is a testament to what can happen when local governments, state governments, and educational institutions work together."

"Criminal justice reform can't just be about changing a few policies, we need to think about every aspect of the justice system. That includes how we train those in positions of responsibility," said Sen. Christopher Belt (D-Cahokia Heights). "When public safety

officers, forensic scientists and law students are all learning alongside each other, everyone benefits from the diversity of experiences and perspectives."

"What was once an empty campus, is now set to be a thriving center of higher learning and justice," said Leader LaToya Greenwood, (D-East St. Louis). "Between the training academy, forensic institute, and the law school, this endeavor will have a lasting impact on the entire region for generations to come."